

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PDEV, PINT, WA
SUBJECT: NAMIBIA: SPLINTER GROUPS MAY LEAVE NNF

1. SUMMARY: THREE SMALL MEMBER GROUPS OF THE NAMIBIA NATIONAL FRONT (NNF), LED BY K. CONRADIE, MAY BE EXPELLED FROM FRONT FOLLOWING THEIR RELEASE TO THE PRESS OF A STATEMENT CRITICAL OF OTHER NNF MEMBERS. WHILE THE FOLLOWING OF THESE THREE GROUPS IS NOT SIGNIFICANT, THEIR POSSIBLE DEPARTURE WILL MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR THE NNF TO SHED ITS IMAGE OF DISORGANIZATION AND DISUNITY. THE POSSIBLE SPLIT, MOREOVER, COMES AT AN UNFORTUNATE MOMENT FOR NNF, JUST WHEN IT SEEMED TO BE GAINING MOMENTUM AS A RESULT OF THE FEDERAL PARTY'S RECENT MEMBERSHIP IN THE FRONT. END SUMMARY.

2. ACCORDING TO WINDHOEK SOURCES, THREE SMALL POLITICAL GROUPS IN THE NAMIBIA NATIONAL FRONT,
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(NNF), LED BY K. CONRADIE, ISSUED A PRESS RELEASE ON MARCH 20, THE GIST OF WHICH WAS TO CRITICIZE WHAT THEY PERCEIVED AS SWANU DOMINATION OF THE NNF. THE GROUPS INVOLVED ARE CONRADIE'S OWN VOICE OF THE PEOPLE (A SMALL DAMARA-BASED GROUP), THE DAMARA TRIBAL EXECUTIVE (ANOTHER MINOR DAMARA PARTY), AND THE BONDELSWARTS (A NAMA GROUP). CONRADIE'S PRESS

RELEASE WAS ALSO SIGNED BY THE SOUTH WEST AFRICA NATIONAL UNITED FRONT (SWANUF), A GROUP WHICH CEASED TO EXIST, EXCEPT ON PAPER, SOME MONTHS AGO.

3. CONRADIE'S ACTION, BECAUSE OF THE ABRUPT MANNER IN WHICH IT WAS CARRIED OUT, WITHOUT CONSULTATION WITH OTHER NNF GROUPS, CAUSED CONSIDERABLE ALARM IN THE NNF. AN EMERGENCY MEETING OF THE NNF EXECUTIVE WAS CALLED ON MARCH 21 TO CONSIDER THE CHARGES, BUT CONRADIE AND HIS SUPPORTERS FAILED TO ATTEND. THE NNF CENTRAL COMMITTEE IS NOW SCHEDULED TO TAKE UP THE MATTER ON APRIL 8.

4. BOTH SWANU PRESIDENT GERSON VEII AND BRYAN O'LINN, WHO IS NOW CHIEF OF PLANNING, INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY FOR NNF, SPECULATED PRIVATELY THAT CONRADIE AND HIS FOLLOWERS WOULD BE EXPELLED FROM NNF AT THE APRIL 8 MEETING. VEII TOLD US THAT THE TWO DAMARA GROUPS BACKING CONRADIE WERE INSIGNIFICANT, BUT THAT THE BONDELSWARTS WERE SOMEWHAT MORE IMPORTANT AND AN EFFORT WOULD BE MADE TO RETAIN THEIR SUPPORT. O'LINN CHARACTERIZED CONRADIE'S ACTION AS "RIDICULOUS" AND "WITHOUT SUBSTANCE," AND REPEATED THAT THE EXPULSION OF THE THREE GROUPS WOULD NOT REPRESENT A SERIOUS LOSS TO THE NNF. HE DID EXPRESS HIS CONCERN, HOWEVER, THAT THE TIMING OF CONRADIE'S ANNOUNCEMENT, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SO SOON AFTER THE FEDERAL PARTY HAD JOINED NNF, WAS A SERIOUS PUBLIC RELATIONS BLOW.

5. INDEPENDENT OBSERVERS IN WINDHOEK CHARACTERIZED CONRADIE'S ACTION AS A VINDICTIVE PERSONAL ATTACK ON VEII. CONRADIE HIMSELF IS GENERALLY HELD IN LOW REGARD AMONG NAMIBIAN POLITICAL GROUPS. HIS POSSIBLE EXPULSION FROM NNF WILL NOT SIGNIFICANTLY ALTER THE GROUP'S BASE OF SUPPORT, BUT WILL MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR NNF TO SHED ITS IMAGE OF DISORBANIZATION AND DISUNITY. MOST OBSERVERS AGREE THAT EVEN IF THE TWO SMALL DAMARA PARTIES ARE EXPELLED, NNF WILL RETAIN MAJORITY SUPPORT AMONG THAT ETHNIC GROUP. (THE NNF PRESIDENT, JUSTUS GAROEB, IS A DAMARA AND IS SAID TO COMMAND MORE SUPPORT THAN EITHER CONRADIE OR E.H.L. CHRISTIE, WHO LEADS THE DAMARA PARTY IN THE DEMOCRATIC TURHALLE ALLIANCE.)

6. MEANWHILE, THE BASTER-BASED BEVRYDINGSPARTY WHICH WAS EXPECTED TO JOIN NNF EARLIER THIS MONTH (CAPE TOWN 0432) HAS STILL NOT DONE SO. ACCORDING TO WINDHOEK SOURCES, THE BEVRYDINGSPARTY (BP) MEMBERSHIP

IS DIVIDED ON THE ISSUE AND THE PARTY LEADERSHIP
DOES NOT WISH TO PROVOKE A SPLIT IN THE PARTY BY
JOINING NNF. BRYAN O'LINN TOLD US, HOWEVER, THAT AS
A RESULT "DOZENS, PERHAPS HUNDREDS" OF INDIVIDUAL
BP MEMBERS ARE RESIGNING AND JOINING NNF THROUGH
THE FEDERAL PARTY.
BOWDLER

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